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ABSTRACT

This report provides a snapshot of school improvement efforts during early 2002 in several cities involved in "Making Connections," a demonstration project based on the premise that children do well when families do well, and families do better when they live in supportive neighborhoods. The project emphasizes three kinds of connections: family economic success, social networks and civic engagement, and services and supports. The report describes the work in each city, including the district context, work underway, and challenges ahead. The chapters focus on "The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Vision for Education"; "Overview and Introduction"; "Observations about 'Making Connections to Improve Education'"; "Baltimore: New Song Academy: Developing Future Community Leaders"; "Denver: The Power is in the Relationships/'El Poder Esta en la Relacia'"; Indianapolis: Schools are the Heart of the Community"; "Milwaukee: Making Connections with Community Schools"; "Oakland: A Partnership for School Reform"; "Providence: The Met School: Strengthening One Family at a Time"; "San Diego: High Tech High School: Connecting to Power"; and "Challenges and Opportunities." Two appendices present local contact information and a glossary of terms. (SM)

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MAKING CONNECTIONS

A Snapshot of School-Based Education Investments in Seven *Making Connections* Sites

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

UD 033 420

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By Jeanne Jehl
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Making Connections to Improve Education
A Snapshot of School-Based Education Investments in Seven *Making Connections* Sites

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The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Vision for Education

All young people, especially those in tough neighborhoods, will attend responsive and effective schools. Such schools strengthen families and neighborhoods by supporting the aspirations of families for their children and preparing these young people for success in the worlds of work, family, and citizenship.

To bring this vision to reality, especially in *Making Connections* communities, the Foundation's decisions about education investments will be guided by six reform principles. These principles include the need to:

- Set high academic standards for all schools that drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment and that state clearly what all students are expected to achieve.

- Give schools—including the least successful schools—the flexibility, resources, and support required to give all students an opportunity to achieve success.

- Create schools that are small enough to engage all students, so that even the most disadvantaged students are connected to and supported by schools.

- Hold all schools and districts accountable for the academic achievement of all students, including those who traditionally have had the least success in school.

- Promote meaningful family empowerment and participation, especially among those who historically have been least likely to participate in school life.

- Make education part of a larger community commitment to healthy youth and family development.

The Foundation supports both the creation of new schools using a variety of existing mechanisms (e.g., charter schools, small schools, contract schools) and the transformation of existing schools using a variety of proven programs and practices. The Foundation organizes its education investments around four priority categories:

- Support for creating or transforming individual schools that strengthen families and neighborhoods;

- Support for intermediaries that create or transform schools to strengthen families and neighborhoods;

- Support for system-wide efforts that create or transform schools to strengthen families and neighborhoods; and

- Support for efforts that foster connections between schools, families, and communities.

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Overview and Introduction

Making Connections, a demonstration project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development Initiative, is based on the premise that children do well when families do well, and families do better when they live in supportive neighborhoods. Since 1999, *Making Connections* has worked in challenging neighborhoods across the United States[1] to strengthen families and improve conditions for children. It emphasizes three kinds of connections that give families the opportunities and support they need to do the best possible job of raising their children:

Family economic success—Connecting young people, adults, and families to information and networks that increase their access to jobs, affordable goods and services, adequate and predictable incomes, non-predatory financial services, and opportunities to accumulate savings and assets.

Social networks and civic engagement—Connecting families to networks of friends, neighbors, kin, community organizations, role models, mentors, faith-based institutions, and other positive social relationships that encourage and provide mutual aid, make people feel less isolated and alone, and increase civic engagement.

Services and supports—Connecting people in need to accessible, affordable, family-centered, and culturally appropriate forms of help that prevent problems and provide ongoing support.

[1] The developmental phase of *Making Connections* began in 22 sites (cities or metropolitan areas). In March 2002, half of those sites continued with the comprehensive agenda of *Making Connections* while the rest received funding to concentrate on specific pieces of work. However, all sites are still considered part of the *Making Connections* learning network.

Schools can play an important role in these connections. Schools can be engines of *economic opportunity* when they provide children with a solid beginning in literacy and mathematics, stimulate their creativity and imagination, and connect them with the world outside the classroom—and when they provide education and training programs and access to employment information for adults. Schools help children and families develop *social connections* when they pay attention to principles of family support and youth development, work in partnership with parents to raise and educate successful children, foster positive relationships among parents, and link families with organizations in the community. Schools ensure access to appropriate *services and supports* for children and families when they provide some of these supports onsite and develop consistent, responsive links to high-quality services and supports in the community.

Public schools also have the benefit of being universal institutions, open to all children and their families. In low-income neighborhoods, the school may be the only public building accessible to children and families. That position in the community gives schools a unique opportunity to strengthen families and neighborhoods.

Too often, however, urban schools fall short of their potential to strengthen families. In many low-income communities, schools are overcrowded and underresourced. Students' academic achievement levels are unacceptably low in these schools, and parents and community members are disconnected from decisions about what goes on inside. Such schools send a message of disinvestment in urban neighborhoods.

Moreover, community residents often find school systems the most challenging of local institutions to

approach, with an incomprehensible language; multiple levels of rules, authority, and structure; and inflexible schedules. The isolation of schools from the communities they serve is reinforced by frequent changes in leadership, from the superintendent to principals, and by multiple and overlapping reform efforts, often initiated without engaging parents and communities.

In *Making Connections* neighborhoods, residents, community-based organizations and school staff are working together to improve children's readiness for school, strengthen the quality of education, and build authentic connections between schools and the communities they serve. The Foundation supports these efforts through the work of its staff, by linking sites with successful peers and other expert consultants, and by providing small targeted "seed grants" for school improvement. In addition, during 2001 Casey awarded special grants to school districts, charter schools, technical assistance providers, and community organizations in seven cities: Baltimore, Denver, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Oakland, Providence, and San Diego. These small grants, ranging from $50,000 to $125,000 per year, were designed to support and advance locally developed school improvement ideas and to foster families' involvement in their children's education.

This report provides a snapshot of those education investments during the early months of 2002. The investments described here do not encompass all of the *Making Connections* strategies for education being developed within each site. They do, however, illustrate important pieces of school improvement work that are closely aligned with *Making Connections* assumptions, goals, and theories about what needs to change in order to make families stronger and give children a better chance for long-term success.

Across the school improvement grants, some common themes emerge: parents' commitment to education as a key to their children's future success; the power of parent leadership in improving schools; the importance of strong positive relationships among students, parents, and school staff; and the power of real-world experience as a part of young people's education. Above all, there is a climate of energy and innovation in these cities, where good people and good ideas are coming together to improve schools—and, in doing so, to benefit children and families.

This report briefly describes the work in each city, including the district context, the work under way as part of *Making Connections*, and the challenges ahead. Within the discussion of each site's efforts, we provide an initial assessment of the initiatives' *impact*—changes in conditions for children and families; *influence*—changes in policy, practice, or procedure of those who serve children, control resources, and design and run systems; and *leverage*—the addition or redirection of financial resources. Concluding sections discuss common themes across the sites and opportunities for future work and engagement. Appendix A provides local contact information, and Appendix B contains a glossary of terms.

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Observations about *Making Connections to Improve Education*

Making Connections communities, the schools that serve them, and the locally designed initiatives to improve schools and strengthen families are similar in three important ways: their context, characteristics, and goals.

THE CONTEXT FOR SCHOOLS IN URBAN COMMUNITIES

***Making Connections* school improvement efforts serve children in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.** In these neighborhoods, children experience conditions that affect their quality of life and create barriers to learning, including poor housing conditions, physical assaults from the environment (e.g., lead paint, high noise levels), and a lack of safe outdoor spaces for playing and learning. Population density is high, and many families move frequently because of economic necessity or in search of a better environment for their children. These neighborhoods are not easy places for growing up—or for learning.

Immigration brings increasing ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity as well as increasing enrollment to schools in these communities. As new immigrant families join more established populations, neighborhoods and schools change. The cultural experiences of newcomers shape their expectations of schools and education, and schools are challenged to reach across linguistic barriers and cultural differences. Further, for many immigrants in urban communities, the high cost of housing and the lack of access to well-paying jobs lead families to concentrate in the few neighborhoods that are affordable, which produces overcrowded schools that are not optimal places for learning.

Families in these communities believe education is important. Families may be absorbed by the demands of economic survival in this country and these communities. They may have little formal education. But they believe that schools have the power to transform their children's lives, and they want their children to have a good education.

Families in these communities are disconnected from sources of power. In some instances, the disconnection is physical, as in a Denver neighborhood cut off from the rest of the city by an elevated freeway and permeated by the odor of a pet food plant. In others, the issue is more personal—when, for example, a public school employee would not provide a parent with information about a charter school.

The school districts that include these neighborhoods are investing in infrastructure. Within the past five years, Indianapolis, Oakland, and San Diego have authorized tax increases for public school facilities. Milwaukee has reached an agreement with the state of Wisconsin to create new schools instead of transporting children to schools outside their neighborhoods. As cities develop new school facilities, opportunities for new school programs—and for community connections—expand.

CHARACTERISTICS OF URBAN SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL SYSTEMS

These urban school systems are large and complex. The school systems represented in the *Making Connections* grants range in size from serving 26,859 students (Providence) to more than 141,000 students (San Diego). Many of these districts operate very large schools, especially in low-income neighborhoods. San Diego, for example, has

a dozen elementary schools that each serve more than 1,000 students.

Court-ordered desegregation programs that have shaped urban districts are coming to an end. In Denver, Indianapolis, and Milwaukee, students are returning to neighborhood schools. The end of desegregation programs in these schools unmasks differences in achievement across ethnic groups and provides an opportunity to reconnect schools and their staff with the families and communities they serve.

Frequent leadership changes complicate the challenge. Political divisions on urban school boards make it difficult for any individual to set a direction for reform and lead the organization in that direction over time. In some of these districts, top-level leadership is not well connected to community-initiated efforts.

There is continuing tension between leadership centralized at the district level and autonomy for schools and the communities they serve. As state and federal governments impose short-term accountability for improving scores on mandated standardized tests, states and districts tend to increase their control over curriculum, instruction, and resources.

Many schools in these districts must rebuild their connections to community assets. School staff may live far from the community and may see the neighborhood as an unsafe place, or be unfamiliar with community organizations and traditions. Residents and representatives of neighborhood organizations frequently have not felt welcome at the schools.

These schools are working to establish deep connections with families of their students. Differences of language and culture may have kept parents away; school staff may not have felt comfortable in working with parents. But school leaders are now sending a message that working with families is important.

CHARACTERISTICS AND GOALS OF THE EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Overall, these initiatives are very new. Several of the programs began during the 2001–2002 school year. At this stage, these initiatives are mostly designing, testing, and tuning their activities. It is too early to see the full impact of their efforts.

These efforts are initiated from outside schools and school systems with the aim of improving education within the schools. The origin, community ownership, and outside funding sources make these efforts very different from more conventional school "reform" initiatives generated within the systems themselves.

Several initiatives seek to personalize schooling for young people. The Met School (Providence) works to provide an education "one kid at a time"; Oakland's Small Schools Initiative seeks to provide "personalized, high-quality teaching and learning" to students; and New Song Academy in Baltimore creates an extended community for both children and parents. These education efforts are consistent with the Foundation's emphasis on the power of social networks to help young people grow up successfully.

Several initiatives seek to build social networks among parents and engage them more directly in their children's schools. Parent organizing initiatives in Oakland and Denver differ from more traditional, school-operated parent involvement programs: they seek to engage parents around their own hopes and concerns for their children's education and reflect a strong commitment to social networks as a means of empowerment.

Several initiatives seek greater choice in education programs for parents and students. The mechanisms for choice in these schools vary, including charter schools in San Diego, Milwaukee, and Denver; BayCES' advocacy for school autonomy within a system of small schools in Oakland; and charter-like special status for

New Song in Baltimore and the Met School in Providence.

Several initiatives are designed to provide access to economic opportunity for young people. The Met School and High Tech High, in particular, provide opportunities for learning in real workplaces through internships. Others, such as Washington Community School in Indianapolis, incorporate individuals and resources from the community into school-based activities.

Some initiatives seek to engage community resources more directly in supporting students and their families. Indianapolis has developed a full-service community school and views it as a model for other community-school partnerships. Baltimore's New Song Academy is part of a comprehensive community-building effort to benefit children and families. These initiatives reflect the Foundation's commitment to providing accessible, family-friendly services and supports for children and their families.

Overall, these initiatives require autonomy for schools and school leaders. Leaders must be able to plan and carry out programs that personalize education for children, engage community resources, and respond to demonstrated needs and preferences in the community. To work respectfully in partnership with communities, school leaders require latitude rather than standardization.

* * *

BALTIMORE

New Song Academy: Developing Future Community Leaders

OVERVIEW

New Song Academy, located in the low-income Sandtown-Winchester area of West Baltimore, is more than a school. It is an integral part of a comprehensive approach to neighborhood development known as "church-based Christian development." Although New Song Academy is part of the public school system's New Schools Initiative, it is operated by New Song Urban Ministries, a multi-pronged community revitalization effort that also addresses residents' housing, employment, health, and spiritual needs.

Sandtown is a tough community where students and their families cope daily with the effects of poverty, drugs, and violence. Parents sometimes come to the school to find support for their problems because they respect the people at the school and trust them, and New Song is committed to helping both parents and children reach their potential for self-sufficiency and community leadership. "It's like being in a big family with 110 kids," says Executive Director Susan Tibbels.

The Casey Foundation has funded New Song Academy for several years as part of its support for Baltimore's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative and other comprehensive community-building efforts. New Song Urban Ministries does not participate in *Making Connections*, however.

In spring 2001, New Song Academy moved into a new facility that serves as a community center, gathering place, and school. Class sizes are kept small—14 students to a classroom—so students can receive personal attention and instruction.

MAKING CONNECTIONS FOR EDUCATION IN BALTIMORE

Casey Foundation support for New Song began in 1994–1995, when Tibbels used a Casey grant to develop a preschool curriculum that helped parents interact with their young children and promote language development. Later, when Tibbels organized a middle-school education program at parents' request, Casey paid for an evaluation of school program and provided a rationale for increased per-pupil funding from the Baltimore City Public Schools. The evaluation also revealed the school's need for a curriculum framework, so the Foundation secured the ongoing services of a school designer from Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound.

Casey continues to support the school; in 2001, the Foundation gave a $125,000 grant to New Song Urban Ministries to support family and community outreach, implementation of the Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound curriculum, afterschool services, and professional development for school staff.

New Song Academy operates year-round from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., beginning with breakfast and a voluntary chapel service. From 5 to 8 p.m., afterschool programs give children a safe place to learn and play. The curriculum incorporates best practices from several sources. Traditionally structured, phonics-based curriculum from the Calvert School (a respected private school in Baltimore) is melded with hands-on, thematic instruction from Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound. Activities are rich in music and the arts, and students also participate in activities that foster social bonds and personal development, such as a chess club, mentoring relationships, and a choir that records its music and performs around the region.

DEMOGRAPHICS AT A GLANCE	BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2001–2002	NEW SONG ACADEMY 2001–2002
Enrollment	95,475	110
Ethnic distribution (rounded to nearest %)		
Hispanic	Less than 1%	0%
African American	88%	100%
White	10%	0%
Asian	Less than 1%	0%
American Indian	Less than 1%	0%
Eligible for free or reduced-price meals	69%	100%
Limited English Proficient	Less than 1%	0%

One of the central elements of New Song is its commitment to recognizing and nurturing the innate leadership talents of community members. As a result, students' family members and other residents play many roles at the Academy—as volunteers, administrative and operational staff, and classroom assistants. Those arrangements provide career development opportunities for many residents, who serve in progressively more responsible positions as they gain knowledge and skills, and ensure that parents have many different avenues for becoming involved in the school.

Because of New Song's emphasis on personal development of many kinds and on community-wide engagement, it is virtually impossible to consider the school program in isolation from New Song's other components. Those programs include:

- **Sandtown Habitat for Humanity,** which provides, builds, and renovates houses and enables very low-income families to buy them

- **New Song Family Health Services,** which provides primary health care for local children and adults

- **Eden Jobs,** which offers job development and placement programs and stimulates economic development in the neighborhood

- **Martha's Place,** a residential drug treatment program for women

- **New Song Arts and Media,** committed to discovering, nurturing, and promoting the talents of Sandtown residents

IMPACT, INFLUENCE, AND LEVERAGE

The impact of New Song Academy on children and families is intertwined with that of the larger New Song Urban Ministries. New Song's comprehensive, holistic approach has helped to embed the enterprise in the community, and it is clear that the immediate neighborhood has become a safer and more desirable place to live as a result. "People are having yard sales on blocks where they never even came out on the sidewalks before," says a board member for Sandtown Habitat for Humanity. And at the school, middle school students now talk about college as a place they expect to attend.

Still, New Song students' test scores generally are not high, and graduates often experience difficulty when they enter the city's large comprehensive high schools. Nearly all the students who go into city-wide high schools drop out within a year. New Song staff therefore work hard to place graduating students in private high schools where they will

receive more individualized attention and academic assistance.

The school district's New Schools Initiative, which includes New Song and other schools, has been something of a test case for school autonomy. The district has named a new group of schools that will operate with greater autonomy than most schools in the system, and New Song staff have been instrumental in supporting the other schools' leaders during their planning phase.

LOOKING AHEAD

New Song is an exciting, vital organization working in and with a growing community. Because it has grown and developed rapidly, the school's leaders see a need to pause before growing again. In particular, they plan to:

- Strengthen and stabilize the financial and organizational infrastructure
- Recruit and retain skilled teachers
- Work with the community to develop standards of conduct for all students, in response to recent disciplinary problems

With these elements in place, New Song can continue to grow, strengthen families, and develop future leaders for the Sandtown community.

• • •

DENVER

The Power Is in the Relationships "El Poder Esta en la Relacia"

OVERVIEW

Northeast Denver is one of this city's *Making Connections* communities. In recent years, immigrant families from Mexico have settled in the mainly Latino and African-American neighborhoods. Many families in the neighborhood now speak Spanish and have little formal education. The 11 public schools in Northeast Denver—three high schools in the Manual High Complex, Cole Middle School, and the elementary schools that feed into them—are struggling. Almost all the schools have been designated "unsatisfactory" by the State of Colorado because students' scores on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) are very low. If these schools do not demonstrate sufficient improvement by spring 2003, the state could close them and reopen them as charter schools.

Neighborhood residents and the Social Action Committee of the Annunciation Catholic Church have become concerned about the schools and the way they are serving their children. But many parents are unaware of the issues and not engaged with their children's schools.

MAKING CONNECTIONS FOR EDUCATION IN DENVER

In 2001, Casey gave a $50,000 grant to the Metropolitan Organizations for People (MOP), a community organizing group in the Pacific Institute for Community Organization network, to support a parent organizing project. Working with MOP, residents developed the school-based Northeast Denver Parent Organizing in Education (NEDPOE) initiative. NEDPOE seeks to improve parent engagement in the schools. With additional financial support from a consortium of local funders, organizers based at each school in the Manual High School cluster conduct one-on-one home visits to determine parents' hopes and concerns; organize meetings with parents at the schools; and work with parents to determine priority issues to address. School-based organizing is a new initiative for MOP, a faith-based organization active across the six-county Denver metropolitan area.

Cec Ortiz, *Making Connections*-Denver's local coordinator, says the education reform efforts reflect a broad commitment to *Making Connections* principles among organizations that can support families and children. She initiated the request to Casey to support community organizing in schools and then built a broad coalition of financial support from other organizations, including city and county government, Denver Public Schools, Piton Foundation,

The Northeast Denver Parent Organizing in Education Covenant

WE BELIEVE IN PROMOTION OF HUMAN DIGNITY. Communities will promote human dignity and respect, protect basic human rights, and prevent disempowerment of our families.

WE BELIEVE IN EQUALIZATION OF POWER. Parents will accumulate and express collective, inclusive and responsible power for the improvement of their families and communities.

WE BELIEVE IN TRANSFORMED ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS. Parents will effect transformative and sustainable change in community organizations, public and private institutions, and their communities.

—Signed by funders, school principals, and community members in the Manual High School area

DEMOGRAPHICS AT A GLANCE	DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2001–2002	MANUAL HIGH SCHOOL 2000–2001
Enrollment	72,437	1,112
Ethnic distribution (rounded to nearest %)		
Hispanic	55%	60%
African American	20%	36%
White	21%	3%
Asian	3%	Less than 1%
American Indian	1%	Less than 1%
Eligible for free or reduced-price meals	56%	79%
English Language Acquisition	23%	26%

Ford Foundation (through the Public Education and Business Coalition), and the Denver Foundation. These funders decided to support school-based organizing as a means of strengthening and engaging families. They believed that MOP organizers would develop and support genuine parent leadership.

The organizing work in each of the schools in the Manual Cluster is structured and disciplined, following a sequence of actions:

- Reach out to parents for one-on-one conversations in their homes to talk about hopes and concerns for the school
- Bring parents together at the school to talk with each other and hear the results of the individual conversations
- Engage parent leaders to reach out to other parents and lead Parent Organizing Committee meetings
- Choose a priority issue for research and action
- Conduct research to learn more about the issue
- Determine the course of action that parents believe should be taken
- Rally public support for that course of action

The parent organizing effort in Northeast Denver is a work in progress. In each school, organizers are working at a slightly different pace, taking care to build parent leadership and ownership as they go. Initial parent responses are similar across the schools, with safety concerns at the top of the list. At the Manual Complex, parents from the Arts and Cultural Studies High School researched issues of safety and truancy at the school by interviewing the school's principal and security officers; standing in the parking lot and observing activity around the outside of the school, including counting cars that left campus during lunch time; and meeting with the local police commander. Their work culminated in a public meeting where parents presented a case for the school and city to increase security and reduce truancy as important steps toward improving students' academic achievement.

IMPACT, INFLUENCE, AND LEVERAGE

The organizing work is already having an impact on parent engagement in some schools. An elementary school principal noted an increasing number of parents, especially fathers, who come to the school and ask her to make changes. "They get a little militant with me," she said, "but that's okay." And the principal of Manual Arts and Cultural Studies High School reflected after meeting with parents that "the parents are non-threatening, but they are serious. They treat me like a professional…like a peer. As this continues, we are going to become healthy partners for the benefit of students."

In addition, because the school-based organizing work at the Manual Complex culminated in requests for action by the school, school district, and police, there is potential for the education effort to affect policies and practices that shape safety and security.

Making Connections-Denver has been highly successful in leveraging support from the local and national foundations described earlier, city government, and the school district to support school-based organizing. The collaborative approach is exemplified by a steering committee, which brings diverse stakeholders together monthly to discuss issues and make key decisions.

LOOKING AHEAD

Denver faces several challenges in sustaining the NEDPOE effort. The school district is becoming more centralized, which leaves the central office with more authority over curriculum and financial resources and the school campuses with fewer discretionary resources. Participating schools have indicated that they will be able to continue to provide a share of the money for the initiative, however.

A greater challenge may arise in the future if parents challenge individual schools or the district to make changes that the systems don't want to make. School principals and district officials will need to be flexible enough to rethink policies and practices in the spirit of true partnership with parents.

The spring 2003 testing results for students in the Manual High School cluster may determine whether these schools continue in the current governance structure. Whatever the outcome, however, an engaged parent community is poised to play a vital role in the schools' revitalization.

* * *

Developing Parents' Social Networks and Leadership

Through NEDPOE, parents learn the rules of organizing:

NEVER DO FOR OTHERS WHAT THEY CAN DO FOR THEMSELVES. The "Iron Rule" of organizing describes the philosophy of empowerment.

START WHERE PEOPLE ARE, BUT DON'T LEAVE THEM THERE. Developing community leaders is more important than any specific outcome.

GO IN DUMB; COME OUT SMART. Organizing entails research and fact-finding.

INDIANAPOLIS

Schools Are the Heart of the Community

OVERVIEW

George Washington Community School fills a city block on Washington Street, a major thoroughfare on the west side of Indianapolis just a few minutes from the Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) campus and the headquarters of the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Less than two years ago, the big yellow-brick school stood vacant, closed because of declining enrollment and a desegregation order that sent many students from the neighborhood to schools in suburban districts. "When that school closed, it cut the heart out of the community," says Diane Arnold, director of the Hawthorne Community Center just across the block from Washington. "Families left; businesses closed. It was devastating." Neighborhood residents, angry at the school district for closing their school, formed the West Side Education Task Force and lobbied for Washington to reopen as a full-service community school.

Today, Washington serves students in grades 6–8 and is the heart of the community again. A community school coordinator, funded by the Casey Foundation and employed by the community center, coordinates services and supports provided to students and their families by 34 community partners, from IUPUI to the Lilly Technology Center to the school's alumni club. Together, these partners are contributing more than $4 million in staffing, services, and financial resources.

An after-school program provides tutoring, recreation and opportunities for students to pursue special interests. Medical, dental, and mental health services are available on site for students. The school's Olympic-size pool is open in the late afternoons, evenings, and on weekends for community members with staffing from the City's Park and Recreation Department, and a community wing includes space for meetings, community events, and recreation. This summer, two community centers will collaborate to provide a summer "day camp" on the campus, and school staff will work with them to develop activities to strengthen students' academic skills.

Setting Neighborhood Priorities for Education

In November 2001, about 50 people in the Martindale-Brightwood neighborhood took part in a series of study circles to prepare for the new school that will be built in the area. The group's priorities were to:

- Build a new school in the neighborhood (rather than reopening a vacant and deteriorating building)
- Provide all-day kindergarten for neighborhood children
- Design and operate the school as a full-service community school
- Enable children from the community to complete school and graduate with strong basic skills, prepared for college and/or the workforce
- Help children develop morals and a sense of duty

The study circle process used *The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide to Education in Our Communities*, published by the Topsfield Foundation.

DEMOGRAPHICS AT A GLANCE	INDIANAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2001-2002	WASHINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL 2001-2002
Enrollment	41,087	658
Ethnic distribution (rounded to nearest %)		
Hispanic	6%	15%
African American	58%	28%
White	33%	56%
Other	3%	1%
Eligible for free or reduced-price meals	78%	83%
English Language Acquisition	4%	6%

MAKING CONNECTIONS FOR EDUCATION IN INDIANAPOLIS

In 2001, Casey funded three projects to increase resident engagement and revitalize education in Indianapolis: (1) a $50,000 grant supported the community school coordinator's position at the Washington Community School, described in the overview to this section; (2) a $66,000 grant supported an innovative charter school development process led by Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson; and (3) a $50,000 grant supported resident planning for new schools in two *Making Connections* neighborhoods and a neighborhood near Washington Community School.

The Mayor's Charter School Authority

Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson, a strong supporter of public education, has been granted authority by the Indiana legislature to charter schools. Peterson believes that the public education system will become more innovative and creative if families have more choices and options. The chartering authority allows five new chartered schools to open each year in Marion County (which includes several smaller school districts as well as Indianapolis Public Schools) beginning in 2001, with the number of unused charters carrying over to be issued in future years. Peterson approved four applications in the first round, and three new schools opened in fall 2002.

Because the Mayor's authority to create charter schools is unique in the nation, Casey has provided financial and technical assistance to his staff to design an application and review process for new charter schools. Following the first round of applications and selections, staff revised the process to provide a longer time line and more guidance for applicants. Additional Casey investment will support development of a model accountability system for charter schools.

Engaging Residents in Planning for New Schools

In Martindale-Brightwood, a *Making Connections* community in northeast Indianapolis, the district plans to build a new school for children who have been attending school in a neighboring township. Supported by an additional $50,000 grant from Casey, a community school organizer based at the Martindale-Brightwood Community Development Corporation fosters relationships among residents by organizing study circles and town meetings to develop priorities for the new school. "People in this community are passionate about education," says

Val Tate, the community school organizer. "Everybody I talk to wants to get involved."

The group is energized by the potential for a brand-new school facility in a neighborhood that lacks public and private investments and has the lowest high school completion rate in the city. Residents believe that a new school, organized around the principles outlined on the previous page, will lay the groundwork for student's educational success.

In the last half of 2002, community members will work with Indianapolis Public Schools staff and the design team for the school to translate their dreams into a brand-new school building. The community organizer will continue to survey residents to elicit their concerns and questions. She also is cultivating support from businesses and organizations in the community, including the head of the local cable television provider who sees the community as a source of future employees.

Similar planning efforts for new schools have begun in two other neighborhoods. In a *Making Connections* neighborhood on the city's south side, community members have begun to plan for a community charter school. On the west side of the city, near the Washington Community School, the West Side Education Task Force is active in planning for a community elementary school.

IMPACT, INFLUENCE, AND LEVERAGE

Washington Community School has documented the impact of changes in the school: increased parent and community engagement in the school, and two consecutive years of significant growth in the number of students meeting state standards in math and language arts. Heeding the strong urging of community residents, Washington added a ninth grade in fall 2002 in an effort to keep improving the high school graduation rate and better prepare young people to participate fully in the city's economy.

The Washington story has also raised expectations for success in serving neighborhoods through full-service community schools, and it has become a

Making Services and Supports Accessible to the Community

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) at Washington Middle School includes parents and representatives from National Starch, Lilly Technology, IUPUI, community health and nonprofit organizations, the school district, and the Washington High School Fifty-Year Alumni Club.

At a recent CAC meeting, a newcomer introduced himself as a minister from Hispanic Community Outreach who works to connect Latino families to services and supports. The minister had learned about the meeting from an ad in the community newspaper—placed there as a public service by Lilly Technology.

symbol for revitalizing the public school system in Indianapolis. "We should be the lighthouse of the community," says Duncan (Pat) Pritchett, the Indianapolis superintendent. "The schools should have the doors wide open and be integrated into the community as a resource."

Washington has had a positive influence on other Indianapolis neighborhoods, too. In the *Making Connections* communities, parents and residents have come together to discuss education and plan for the return of students to their communities. These connections among residents will be the basis of their engagement when the schools begin to serve students, and they may also promote civic engagement beyond school issues.

The Mayor's charter school effort has influenced public discussion about education in Indianapolis, giving it new visibility and a positive tone. His leadership was central to the community's acceptance of a tax increase for new school facilities in the Indianapolis Public Schools.

Finally, Washington Community School demonstrates the power of a community school to leverage assets for education and youth development. The school received $4.2 million in resources from the school's 34 partners over one year.

LOOKING AHEAD

In Indiana, as in many other states, uncertainties about the level of funding for public education may slow the pace of change. But a strong role has emerged for community members to shape and improve the schools. A second group of charter schools was selected in August 2002 to open in fall 2003. Schools throughout the city are seeking to follow Washington as full-service community schools.

Across Indianapolis, from grassroots community groups to the Chamber of Commerce, there is increased engagement in public education. By providing support for the full-service community school at Washington, involving residents in school planning in the Martindale-Brightwood and Southeast neighborhoods, and strengthening the infrastructure for the Mayor's charter school effort, the Foundation seeds and nurtures this work.

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SCHOOLHOUSE

MILWAUKEE

Making Connections with Community Schools

OVERVIEW

The Todd Wehr Metcalfe Park Community Center is a unique facility and a catalyst for changing an entire neighborhood by meeting both the educational and youth development needs of children and the neighborhood's need for a community center. As part of a $170 million initiative to build new schools and bring students back to the neighborhoods where they live, the school district worked with the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Milwaukee to build a single facility to serve K–8 students in the Metcalfe Park area. The new building houses both the Ralph Metcalfe Neighborhood School and the Roger and Leona Fitzsimonds Branch of the Boys and Girls Club; it features a library, health clinic, cafeteria, counseling services, and athletic facilities. Young people attend the school and remain in the building for extended day programs including sports, homework help, and recreation.

Metcalfe is the prototype for the Milwaukee Public Schools' Neighborhood Schools Initiative, which will create other new schools as community anchors in partnership with community organizations. Through the initiative, the district is "investing in the community where the schools are . . . [by] working with faith-based institutions, not-for-profit organizations, and others," says former school Superintendent Spence Korte. His vision for a "covenant with the community" includes partnerships between schools, day care providers, and other youth-serving groups to provide all-day preschools, kindergartens, and K–8 schools in neighborhoods where parents are concerned about young people's safety. By involving the schools with organizations that excel in their mission (such as Boys and Girls Clubs), partnerships have "changed the lay of the land in Milwaukee," Korte says.

MAKING CONNECTIONS FOR EDUCATION IN MILWAUKEE

The *Making Connections* community in Milwaukee includes three overcrowded elementary schools that will be rebuilt as "Partnership Schools," jointly housing schools and youth-serving agencies, and Washington High School, a large comprehensive school that serves students from the area. In these schools, parents are an important—but often disengaged—resource.

Making Connections' efforts to improve children's school experiences inspired these schools to work together for the first time. Parents and teachers developed "Family Connection Groups" in each school, which identify shared priorities for action. At Washington High School, parents and teachers also established "Youth Connection Groups." In addition, each school sponsored two school/community meals to encourage family involvement in the schools.

Casey funding supported work with the large Hmong community in the *Making Connections*-Milwaukee area. That effort, facilitated by connections to the Hmong American Friendship League, brought parents' high expectations for their children into sharper focus for school staff.

With a $67,200 grant from Casey, the school district and its community partners developed a district-wide *Making Connections* Symposium on Community Schools. The forum included perspectives from community school practitioners in New York, Washington Community School in Indianapolis, and the national Coalition for Community Schools. Milwaukee's deputy school superintendent challenged the participants to have high expectations for student achievement:

DEMOGRAPHICS AT A GLANCE	MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2001–2002	METCALFE SCHOOL 2001–2002
Enrollment	103,550	392
Ethnic distribution (rounded to nearest %)		
Hispanic	16%	0%
African American	60%	97%
White	16%	1%
Asian	5%	Less than 1%
American Indian	1%	Less than 1%
Other	2%	1%
Eligible for free or reduced-price meals	66%	87%
Limited English Proficient	7%	0%

"What would it look like in this community if all our children were functioning at or above grade level?"

After the symposium, school-community planning groups met to develop a framework for ongoing work in the *Making Connections* Community Schools. Their goals are to: (1) increase students' achievement so that 90 percent of students meet or exceed district and state average performance in reading, writing, and math and are positively engaged in their communities; (2) reduce mobility in the schools so that 90 percent of families remain anchored in the neighborhood and 90 percent of students remain in the same school; and (3) increase economic opportunities by ensuring that students and their families have the educational skills needed for high-quality employment. Those goals reflect the overall objectives of *Making Connections*-Milwaukee, which has one additional goal: improving the quality of life in the neighborhoods.

To pursue those goals, planners are developing a leadership academy for parents and continuing to build a cadre of student leaders at Washington High School.

IMPACT, INFLUENCE, AND LEVERAGE

The Metcalfe School/Boys and Girls Club partnership is the first of the partnership schools planned by the school district in collaboration with community organizations. Additional schools are planned for the *Making Connections* neighborhoods. But Milwaukee's *Making Connections* community schools effort is still young, and it is too early to assess its impact and influence on schools and the community. Undoubtedly, a recent change in superintendents makes its long-term influence uncertain.

The Metcalfe facility has stimulated new development in the neighborhood. A new, 60,000-square-foot Jewel-Osco store created jobs and provided an attractive alternative to the corner grocery store for local residents. A tax increment district helps to funnel benefits from the new commerce back into the neighborhood; it has paid for street lights, a football field, and a local business development fund.

The commitments of community-based organizations, including the Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, and the Police Athletic League, represent important leverage for the school improvement

effort and for family strengthening in general. Additional commitments have come from Milwaukee Public Schools, the Milwaukee Foundation, the Hmong American Friendship Association, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. A grant from the Joyce Foundation will help the school district and the Boys and Girls Club use the Metcalfe partnership experience to develop materials and a process for planning additional partnership schools. An additional grant of $50,000 from the Casey Foundation to the Greater Milwaukee Committee supports the planning process for a charter High School of Science and Technology.

In addition, planners of the Symposium on Community Schools are now developing a Family Educational Partnership Institute, in collaboration with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). The institute will emphasize early childhood development, home and school collaboration, career opportunities, employability skills, community development, and service learning opportunities for youth.

LOOKING AHEAD

Under Korte's leadership, the district worked to develop a citywide "covenant" for improving student achievement. One vehicle was the Milwaukee Partnership Academy, which includes the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the heads of the teachers' union, Workforce Investment Board, Milwaukee Area Technical College, and the Greater Milwaukee Association of Commerce. The state's lieutenant governor and the superintendent of public instruction, along with teachers and parents, also joined the Partnership Academy.

Korte challenged the partners to directly address issues of underachievement in the Milwaukee Public Schools by making changes in their own organizations and institutions—for example, by asking the university to redesign the way teachers are prepared to work in urban schools. The transition in top-level district leadership makes the future of this partnership uncertain, however.

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OAKLAND
A Partnership for School Reform

OVERVIEW

In Oakland, the school district seeks to improve education by forming new small schools and transforming existing large schools. The Oakland Unified School District works in partnership with the Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools (BayCES), a nonprofit organization dedicated to the improvement and greater equity of student outcomes throughout California's Bay Area, and with Oakland Community Organizations (OCO), a church-based community organizing group that organizes parents to advocate for smaller, more personalized schools.

The school district, with leadership from the school board and Superintendent Dennis Chaconas, has developed policies to restructure the entire system to support small schools. The small schools movement enjoys broad support in Oakland, and the mayor, former California Governor Jerry Brown, spoke at a recent conference on small schools to support the change.

Parents are integral to school reform in Oakland. "Urban schools are not as successful as they might be because they don't systematically engage families and communities," Chaconas says. "We need to change the structure of the district to bring this about." The relationship between the district and OCO is based on personal commitment from Chaconas and Ron Snyder, OCO's director. "When I get a letter from Ron about an issue in the community, I drop what I'm doing to get together, even if it is Saturday or Sunday," says the superintendent.

Until March 2000, when voters approved two ballot measures to build new schools, the Oakland district had not built a new facility in 30 years. Schools have become massively overcrowded, especially in the urban "flatlands" communities that are home to many immigrant families. Five new schools opened in fall 2002, however, and more are under construction.

Building Parent Leadership through Social Networks

"The principal wouldn't let me distribute a flyer on the school grounds for a meeting about small schools, because it didn't have a district stamp (that approved its distribution)," one parent recounted. "I went to OCO and got the stamp. Then I came back and gave the principal a copy of the flyer. I felt energy! Confidence!"

MAKING CONNECTIONS FOR EDUCATION IN OAKLAND

In 2001, Casey gave an $83,200 grant to BayCES to support technical assistance on the creation of small schools in the Lower San Antonio neighborhood, home to *Making Connections*-Oakland. Large numbers of immigrant families live in this densely populated area, and its schools have been among the largest and most overcrowded—as well as the lowest achieving.

A parent from the Lower San Antonio community tells a typical story: When she became concerned about the overcrowded conditions at her child's school, she talked about it with others at her church. With help from community organizers, the church held a meeting. More than 2,000 people showed up to voice their concerns and plan actions. Other meetings followed, as parents began to make their voices heard. Church-based organizing continues to mobilize parents around school-related issues. The death of a child struck by a speeding car while on her way to school, for example, motivated

DEMOGRAPHICS AT A GLANCE	OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 2001-2002	LIFE ACADEMY 2001-2002
Enrollment	53,108	251
Ethnic distribution (rounded to nearest %)		
Hispanic	30%	50%
African American	45%	25%
White	6%	0%
Asian	16%	21%
American Indian	1%	1%
Eligible for free or reduced-price meals	52%	64%
English Language Acquisition	35%	41%

parents to confront the city about enforcing speed limits in the neighborhood.

With support from a variety of funders, BayCES now provides coaching, technical assistance, and district-level advocacy for policies that will create and sustain new small autonomous schools, known as NSAS. The BayCES effort, known as the Small Schools Incubator, will help local NSAS design teams develop successful proposals; plan curriculum, assessment, governance, professional development, and other systems; and troubleshoot implementation. BayCES also provides professional development for these schools over a two-year period.

The NSAS concept goes far beyond building new schools, however. It seeks to fundamentally redefine the central district's function and its relationship to schools. Chaconas believes that, without a supportive school district to provide infrastructure, charter schools almost inevitably waste their energy and get bogged down in bureaucratic issues. He sees NSAS as a way to transform not only schools but the district's central office, making its services more accountable to and useful for schools. In particular, the district is committed to working through several issues of autonomy outlined by BayCES, shown in a box on this page. "It's a matter of degrees of difference," says Evelyn Morabe, Small Schools director for the district; "we work from dependence to interdependence to independence" as the district and school cultures evolve.

IMPACT, INFLUENCE, AND LEVERAGE

Because the small schools effort in Oakland is relatively new, it is difficult to discern impact on student achievement. Parent and community engagement in the schools has increased because of church-based organizing and parent involvement in planning for new schools.

BayCES' Areas of Autonomy Necessary for New Small Schools

- Staffing
- Budget
- Curriculum and assessment
- Governance and policies
- School calendar and schedule
- Contiguous space identifiable as "our school"

These autonomies play out differently across campuses as school staff, communities, and the district develop an understanding of the ways the schools can function.

As the New Small Autonomous Schools effort begins to reach a critical mass, and its influence changes school and district policies and practices, conflicts with other interests in the community are inevitable. Employee bargaining units, especially the teachers' union, are concerned about procedures for staff selection and transfer. And within the *Making Connections* effort itself, there are competing interests over land use. Should valuable land be used for a new school or for new commercial development that would improve the economic vitality of the community? The school district, city government, and *Making Connections* stakeholders are working to share information that will enable them to develop satisfactory solutions.

The momentum building behind the small schools initiative in Oakland is beginning to leverage additional support, including a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Together with Casey's grant, this money will help develop and sustain BayCES' Small Schools Incubator, enabling the district and its partners to develop new small schools and transform additional large schools in 2003.

Life Academy:
A New Small Autonomous School (NSAS)

Life Academy, a spinoff from the Life Sciences program at Fremont High School—one of Oakland's comprehensive senior high schools—was in its first year of operation in 2002. The school served about 250 students in a former adult education facility just outside the *Making Connections* community.

Laura Flaxman, Life Academy's principal, came to Oakland to start the school in partnership with Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound. She recruited teachers from outside the district and selected a young staff: "We opted over and over for diversity, inexperience, and enthusiasm," she said. BayCES coaches have helped with the intensive planning necessary to support the school's project-based curriculum.

In a tenth-grade humanities class, the teacher leads a small group of students in a simulation of the events leading up to World War I. "Are you guys straight with who your friends and enemies are?" she asks. The students are interested; many are actively engaged. "Man, this is tight," one young man calls out. "It's much better than reading out of books."

LOOKING AHEAD

The small schools concept is one of the most popular ideas in school reform right now. These schools provide a source of social networks for young people and adults; many provide access to services and supports from the community; and many emphasize community-based learning that connects students to economic opportunity.

Oakland is seen as a leader in the national effort to create small schools. The school district and its community partners acknowledge that size alone will not make a difference in outcomes for students, however. What matters most is the quality of students' experiences in the schools and the engagement of families and communities in supporting students. Sustained change in the *Making Connections* neighborhood and across the district will require a continued strong partnership among BayCES, the school district, and Oakland Community Organizations.

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PROVIDENCE

The Met School: Strengthening One Family at a Time

OVERVIEW

The Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center (The Met) is a public high school in Providence that uses real-world experiences to build students' skills and knowledge. The school, which designs educational experiences "one kid at a time," seeks to connect young people with caring adults—parents, advisors, and others—through internships and mentoring. Students work in advisory groups of 13 to 15, each led by a certified teacher/advisor. Each student has a "learning team," which includes the student and his or her advisor, parent or guardian, and mentor. The team creates an individualized learning plan, based on the student's individual interests, talents, and needs, and updates it throughout the year.

The Met's original campus is in a downtown building that also houses the state's department of education and continuing education programs for the Rhode Island Community College. A second campus on Peace Street houses another small school. In fall 2002, The Met will open four small schools, each in its own building on a brand-new campus in the *Making Connections* area of South Providence. Each campus serves eight advisory groups, and all students on a campus work together on community service and learning projects. The school is closely tied to the community through these learning activities and community-building events.

Parents and families are an integral part of students' experience at The Met. As part of their child's application to attend the school, parents write an essay and attend the interview to make sure the school is a good match for the family. Once the student is accepted, parents sign an agreement with the school to provide assistance, support their child, and attend learning plan meetings and schoolwide events. "We engage parents as a resource," says Elliot Washor, co-founder of The Met. "They know more about the students than we do."

One Student at a Time

At a workshop on education strategies in *Making Connections* communities, panelists discussed strategies for high school reform. When the conversation turned to personalized learning agendas, Tiffany Wilson, a tenth-grade student from The Met, described an activity that her advisor proposed for her: A Civil Rights tour through the South.

"I didn't think I could do it," Tiffany said, "[but] I did it, and it changed my life."

MAKING CONNECTIONS FOR EDUCATION IN PROVIDENCE

In 2001, Casey made a $50,000 grant to The Big Picture Company for The Met School to support a school community coordinator, who ensures that the campus provides support and opportunities for community residents as well as for Met students. These supports include a school-based health clinic, performing arts center, multi-purpose gym, and spaces for community nonprofit organizations.

In 2001–2002, The Met held a series of intergenerational family nights for parents and family members, many of whom speak little English. These twice-weekly learning events begin with dinner for parents and children. After dinner, adults can take classes in GED preparation, English as a Second Language, Spanish for English Speakers, and computer skills; students from Brown University's

DEMOGRAPHICS AT A GLANCE	PROVIDENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2001-2002	THE MET SCHOOL 2000-2001
Enrollment	26,859	220
Ethnic distribution (rounded to nearest %)		
Hispanic	50%	38%
African American	23%	17%
White	17%	43%
Asian	9%	2%
American Indian	1%	0%
Eligible for free or reduced-price meals	77%	54%
Enrolled in English as a Second Language and/or Bilingual Education	21%	No program provided. Students speak English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Cambodian.

Swearer Center for Public Service serve as tutors. Children, many of whom attend a local K–8 charter elementary school with the same leadership and philosophy as The Met, participate in literacy activities while their parents are in class.

The family nights, initially supported by a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, began as a way to build community among the parents of Met students. With additional Casey support, however, the events expanded to include a broader audience at the South Providence campus. "When we opened family nights to the community, the response was overwhelming," says Elayne Walker-Cabral, director of family and community relations. The popular event now vividly demonstrates the powerful connections between this school and its community—including extended family, neighbors, and friends of Met students.

IMPACT, INFLUENCE, AND LEVERAGE

The Met has demonstrated its impact on students. Among June 2001 graduates, for example, 92 percent of students applied to colleges, and all were accepted by at least one. Teacher responses on the School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) surveys, administered in every school in Rhode Island, reveal consistent use of hands-on learning, individual mentoring and coaching, and real-world learning activities as strategies for teaching and learning.

The Met's impact on families is documented in parent responses on the SALT surveys. Nearly 100 percent agree that "this school views parents as

Building Social Networks and Economic Opportunity

The Met's final Family Night of spring 2002 was a celebration of community building. After a family dinner catered by a local resident, adults and children moved to classrooms for an hour of informal instruction in English, computer literacy, and other skills that can lead to success in school and the workplace. Brown University students served as teachers. At the end of the session, each participant received a certificate of completion. Met staff, Brown students, parents, and children joined in applause, with hugs all around.

important partners," in comparison to fewer than 50 percent of similar parents citywide and fewer than 40 percent of parents statewide. Similarly, nearly 80 percent of parents at The Met strongly agree that "this school is a safe place," compared to about 40 percent citywide and about 35 percent statewide.

As The Met scales up program implementation in Providence, it has begun to influence public education in the state. By fall 2002, when The Met opens its new campus in South Providence, it will enroll about 660 high school students, nearly 15 percent of the high school students in Providence, in three locations. This begins to feel like a "critical mass" of support for the school's approach, says co-founder Dennis Littky. He points to the rise in applications for charter schools statewide and to school reform initiatives in Providence as evidence that the school has influence beyond its own campuses.

The Big Picture Company, The Met's parent organization, has obtained support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to scale up implementation in communities across the nation. Three additional Big Picture schools are expected to open in fall 2002. Because Big Picture leaders see the school's vision and mission as similar to the *Making Connections* approach, staff are eager to provide information and assistance to other *Making Connections* communities, which could leverage investment and action in those sites.

LOOKING AHEAD

As staff prepare to expand Big Picture schools in South Providence and beyond, it will be important to keep family strengthening and community engagement values in clear focus. Too often, high school programs pay limited attention to families—and especially to building their social networks and access to the economy. The Met has an opportunity to demonstrate the power of enrolling "one *family* at a time." Accordingly, staff are preparing materials to engage families in the new schools.

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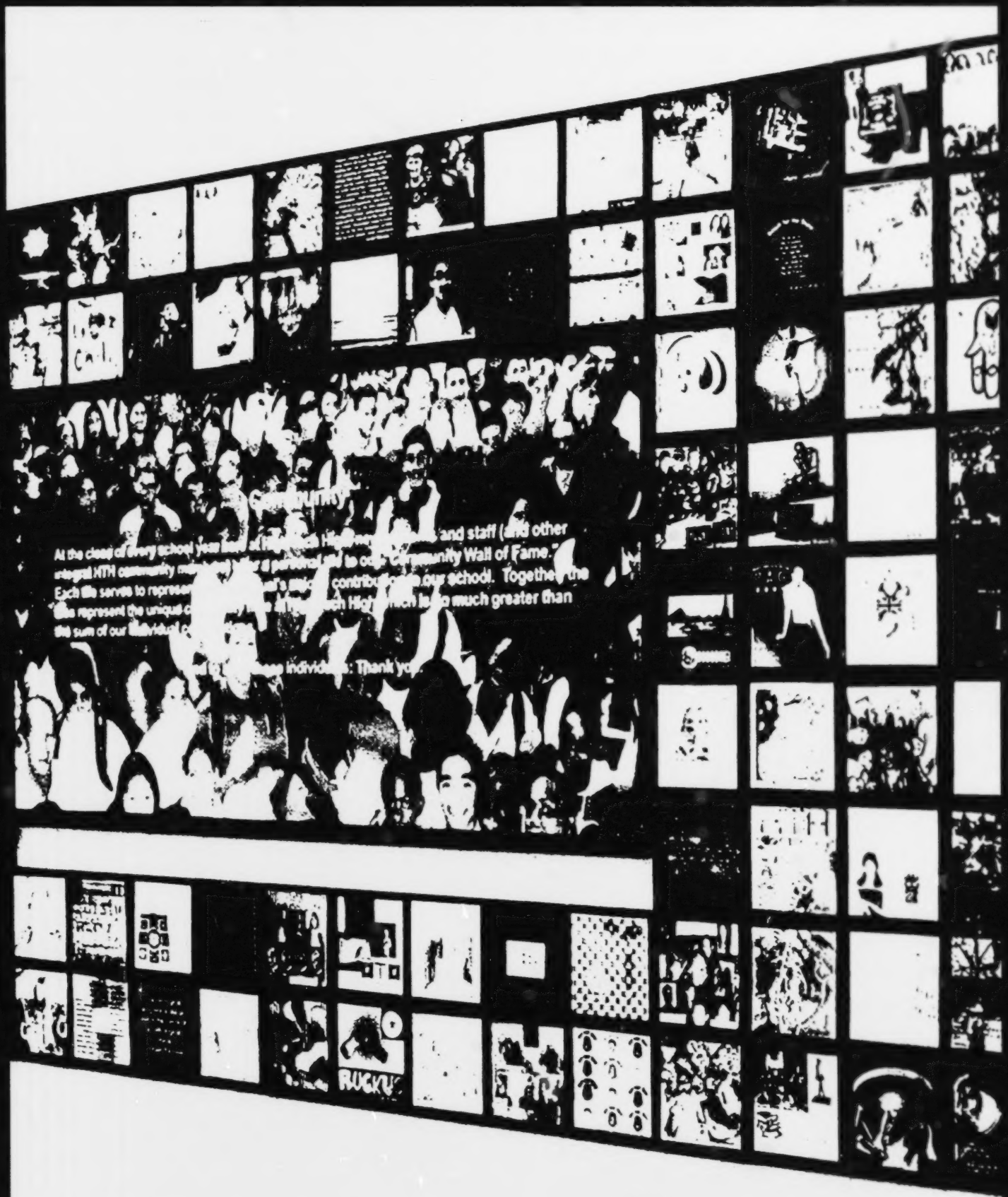
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SAN DIEGO

High Tech High School: Connecting to Power

OVERVIEW

To the visitor who walks into High Tech High School in San Diego, the message is clear: this is a different kind of school. The interior of an old building at the former Naval Training Center has been remodeled to resemble a high tech workplace. The building's exposed infrastructure provides a lesson in electronic communication. Students and staff meet and talk in small groups in an open-space front room, and pairs of students share workstations equipped with computers.

High Tech High is a charter school, the brainchild of San Diego's high tech business community working in collaboration with the Business Roundtable for Education of the Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce. Business leaders were frustrated with the difficulty in hiring qualified employees and wanted to be able to "grow their own" in the community. Although their long-term intent is to influence the public system, they decided to begin by establishing a single charter school.

CEO Larry Rosenstock has worked to build a high school that embodies school reform principles identified by the U.S. Department of Education's New American High Schools project. High Tech High is not a "technical school"; instead, it provides a full high school curriculum with an emphasis on project-based learning and immersion in the world outside of school.

MAKING CONNECTIONS FOR EDUCATION IN SAN DIEGO

In 2001, Casey made a $50,000 grant to the High Tech High Foundation of San Diego to support its academic internship program. High Tech High's education program is based on three key principles:

- **Personalization**—Each student has a faculty advisor, develops a customized learning plan, and creates a personal digital portfolio to track achievements and aspirations.

- **Real-world immersion**—Learning is project-based, providing students with an opportunity to learn while working on problems of interest and concern to adults in the community. Students in the eleventh and twelfth grades participate in academically rigorous industry internships.

- **Intellectual mission**—Learning goals emphasize habits of mind, art and design, communication, technology, collaboration, and ethics and responsibility. The curriculum is engaging and rigorous, providing the foundation for success at post-secondary institutions.

Internships are an integral part of the curriculum. Each student must spend two afternoons a week for at least one trimester working in a business or nonprofit organization. "Internships are a context for learning, not a destination," says Rebecca Haddock, the school's vice principal and director of outreach. Through internships, students apply their skills and learn about the world outside school, taking on projects that require teamwork, creativity, and attention to detail. At the end of the trimester, each student stands before peers, parents, and business mentors to reflect on his or her learning.

Because High Tech High students from the *Making Connections* neighborhoods live far away from most businesses, and San Diego lacks a viable public transportation system, Casey funding helps pay for transportation for students who participate in internships.

DEMOGRAPHICS AT A GLANCE	SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS 2001–2002	HIGH TECH HIGH SCHOOL 2001–2002
Enrollment	141,969	243
Ethnic distribution (rounded to nearest %)		
Hispanic	40%	20%
African American	17%	15%
White	27%	45%
Asian	3%	4%
American Indian	1%	1%
Filipino	8%	8%
Indochinese	6%	5%
Pacific Islander	1%	1%
Eligible for free or reduced-price meals	63%	24%
English Learners	28%	1%

Planners had hoped to locate High Tech High in the Imperial Avenue Corridor, within the *Making Connections*-San Diego community. But a promised new facility in the community was never built, and the opportunity arose to locate the school in the redeveloping former Naval Training Center across town. High Tech High recruits students from across San Diego, however, and All Congregations Together—an organization based in the *Making Connections* community—actively recruits girls and African-American, Latino, and Asian students for the school. Students apply to attend High Tech High and are selected, without regard to achievement, in a lottery structured to ensure a diverse student body.

IMPACT, INFLUENCE, AND LEVERAGE

The High Tech High program makes a difference for students. Although admission to the school is not based on high grades or test scores, the student scores on the SAT–9 in spring 2001 compare favorably with those at La Jolla High School, the district's highest-achieving comprehensive high school.

High Tech High influences the San Diego community in several ways:

- It is recognized as an exemplary school. The school maintains a waiting list, and community members have successfully petitioned it to expand services to include junior high students.

- Along with other charter schools, it serves as a model of autonomy for San Diego schools. For example, La Jolla High School has sought for several years to be exempt from district-mandated curriculum requirements. The district and the school recently reached an agreement to pilot exemption status at La Jolla High and, potentially, other schools with high student achievement, based in part on the success of High Tech High.

- Superintendent Alan Bersin sees it as a vehicle for informing the district's high school reform efforts, especially through smaller schools and more personalized learning. Bersin also points to the successful involvement of businesses with High Tech High as a model for expanding private-sector support for public education in the district.

• Members of the business community have become involved in developing and fine-tuning the school's curriculum. Notes Mareasa Isaacs, Casey's top staff liaison to San Diego, "*Making Connections* is about connecting to the power structure, and High Tech High is a prime example of that."

High Tech High's successful partnerships with the business sector have leveraged additional investment in the concept. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has awarded the school $6.4 million to expand to the junior high grades and to replicate the model in other communities, mostly in California.

Internships Increase Access to Economic Opportunity.

LARRY ROSENSTOCK, CEO OF HIGH TECH HIGH: "Internships are a very old idea. . . . This is the way that students have learned for thousands and thousands of years."

JACK ABBOTT, EMPLOYER: "They learned project management, responsibility, ethics. I watched these young men grow during the time they were with us."

A HIGH TECH HIGH STUDENT: "My work required me to be very meticulous, a trait that I have always lacked."

ANOTHER STUDENT: "When I am successful as a CEO, I hope I have a chance to reach out to students."

A PARENT: "He has blossomed—a very quiet kid who was a follower. Responsibility and deadlines [have improved] through project work."

LOOKING AHEAD

High Tech High is challenged to grow while maintaining its initial high quality. The school opened in fall 2000 with just 200 ninth- and tenth-graders. By fall 2002, it will enroll 400 students in all four senior high school grades, and a High Tech Junior High program will open in another building just across the street.

San Diego has an opportunity to apply the learning from High Tech High at Lincoln High School, the public school that serves a large part of the *Making Connections* community. Lincoln, housed in an aging and substandard facility, will be rebuilt over the next four years. The district and community are working to plan the organization and curriculum for the new Lincoln, and they hope to establish several small schools within an educational complex. They don't have to go very far to look for one model. High Tech High is just across town.

* * *

Challenges and Opportunities

Overall, the seven school-based education initiatives that the Annie E. Casey Foundation has supported in *Making Connections* sites reflect the demonstration project's core principles. They:

Add value. Some communities have initiated new efforts while others have chosen to adapt ideas that worked in similar communities. The Foundation has added value by enabling communities to learn from one another: bringing together community organizers from Denver and Oakland, for example, and inviting community school leaders from New York and Indianapolis to make presentations at the community schools forum in Milwaukee.

"You can't mandate what matters. The principal needs to be willing to learn on the job."

—Principal Luis Malave, I.S. 218, New York City

Do no harm. By joining new efforts designed at the local level in response to local requests, the Foundation has worked to support relationships rather than to unbalance or disrupt them.

In Oakland, Casey Foundation support for BayCES enables it to continue playing a strong role in the three-way partnership among the school district, BayCES, and Oakland Community Organizations, with special focus on the *Making Connections* communities.

Lead with ideas, not money. Foundation support has, in general, been limited to small "seed money" grants that serve as a catalyst for support from local investments and resources. In many communities, the Foundation is just one of several supporters for the initiative.

In Denver, the Casey Foundation joined the Ford and Piton Foundations, the city and county, and the Denver Public Schools in funding the NEDPOE initiative.

Take time to build relationships. In each case, Foundation support for the education initiatives came after relationships were built between Casey staff and people in the communities. Financial support came not as the result of a grant application but in response to a good idea—and after productive conversations with people in the community.

"I always go to community meetings. I pay them that respect."

—Principal Eileen Champagne, Washington Community School, Indianapolis

Break new ground. Many of these efforts are new, such as placing parent organizers on school campuses in Denver. Providence has created an innovative program to engage parents and improve students' school achievement, and BayCES in Oakland is developing an "incubator" for new schools that is outside the school district structure.

"I saw a graphic on school size and test scores— the disparity was dramatic. Small school work is a social justice issue. We should support them—it's congruent with our mission."

—Ron Snyder, Oakland Community Organizing

Make new mistakes. The innovative nature of some efforts, and the difficulty of predicting the future in urban school districts, practically guarantee that some mistakes will be made. By establishing cross-site opportunities for learning, the Foundation is attempting to reduce the chances that mistakes will be repeated.

"Lots of rapids ahead on this river."

—Alan Gottlieb Piton Foundation, Denver

Engage multiple stakeholders. Each of the education initiatives grows from a *Making Connections* effort that engages multiple stakeholders across boundaries of race, power, and class. Because these education initiatives work to improve schools from the outside, their success depends on creating a powerful constituency for change. It is too big a job for any one individual or organization to do alone.

The move to create New Small Autonomous Schools in Oakland is the product of a partnership among the school district, a church-based community organizing group, and a nonprofit technical assistance organization.

Cultivate local leadership. Local leaders are integral to the success of the *Making Connections* education initiatives. In each city, it is local leaders—in community-based and business organizations, faith-based organizations, schools, and local philanthropies—who have emerged as champions for the school improvement agenda. They view education reform as an integral part of strengthening communities and supporting families.

The principal of The Met School in Providence is engaging other local leaders in planning for community services and opportunities to be located on the school's new campus.

Even—perhaps *especially*—the newest, most innovative efforts must look ahead, however. In the future, *Making Connections* education initiatives will be challenged to:

Specify and achieve results. Casey believes that the kinds of work described in this report—efforts that involve parents in their children's education and help schools develop the structures, resources, and staff knowledge needed to ensure high-quality, responsive learning opportunities—have the potential to change lives in America's tough communities. But that will only happen if the people and systems involved in the work stay focused on achieving results. In each site, the work ahead will include identifying achievable outcomes, building consensus around the desired results and the actions that will produce them, establishing clear indicators of success, measuring progress toward the results, and using the information for continuous improvement.

Sustain momentum. New initiatives in schools and school districts are established every year, and there is a tendency to pay attention just to the newest efforts. This is particularly true for schools that operate on a traditional calendar with a long summer break. It will be a challenge for some communities to enter the second year of an education initiative with sufficient resources and with staff who are seasoned but still enthusiastic. In addition, some communities are concerned about maintaining momentum after the initial short-term funding expires.

Think about impact, influence, and leverage. Although it is still too early for most of these initiatives to demonstrate results, it is not too early to determine what results the initiatives seek and to track progress toward those results. Local efforts can begin to document: their impact on indicators of success for children and families; their influence on policies and practices at the local school, district, and community levels; and their ability to leverage resources to expand and sustain the work.

Continue to grow . . . with quality. Several of the initiatives have built-in commitments to growth: Washington Community School will add a grade each year until it has a full senior high school program; High Tech High will add a junior high school; the mayor of Indianapolis may charter five new schools each year; and Oakland plans to open eight additional small schools by 2003. Expansion will bring a host of practical challenges that may seem more urgent than the need to sustain quality and commitment to relationships.

Develop and retain high-quality staff. Innovative efforts often involve entrepreneurial, energetic staff. Recruitment, training, and retention entail infusing people with a vision for change, paying attention to personal relationships, and building staff members' skills. As the education initiatives grow and mature, staff turnover is sure to become an issue.

Think about creating change in public systems. Those who seek broader change may want to consider the ingredients for success described by Paul Hill, et al. in *It Takes a City*[1]:

- School performance incentives, including the potential for reconstituting schools, providing choices for parents, and developing performance agreements between schools and the school system. The state's timeline for closing "unsatisfactory" schools in Denver, and Oakland's commitment to provide choice for parents among small schools, fall into this category.

- Investments in capabilities, including the use of outside assistance and school improvement teams at sites. The partnership with BayCES and OCO in Oakland provides a source of continuous capacity-building in Oakland; San Diego has benefited from the development of the New American High Schools model; and New Song Academy in Baltimore and Life Academy in Oakland have developed their programs with assistance from Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provides a source of intellectual capital for expanding programs such as High Tech High and The Met School to other communities.

- School freedom of action, which requires that school autonomy be balanced with district and state accountability. Oakland seems to be addressing this issue most directly, while Indianapolis is developing site autonomy on a case-by-case basis.

The education initiatives in *Making Connections* sites hope to change children's school experiences by strengthening the bonds among schools, families, and communities; increasing families' access to education opportunities; and ensuring access to responsive community services and supports. Because these efforts are initiated from the community, they often exist alongside other efforts to strengthen instruction, assessment, and accountability in schools. In the coming years, it will be important to observe their progress—and the schools' progress in integrating them with other innovations so that they yield positive results.

* * *

[1]Hill, Paul T., Christine Campbell, and James Harvey. (2000). *It Takes a City: Getting Serious About Urban School Reform.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press. Pp. 65–70.

Ingredients for School Success in *Making Connections* Sites (Early 2002)			
CITY	SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INCENTIVES	CAPABILITIES INVESTMENTS	SCHOOL FREEDOM OF ACTION
Baltimore	Achievement requirements on state-mandated tests	New Song Academy's use of Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound	City's New Schools Initiative allows some freedom of action
Denver	State mandate to close failing schools unless they demonstrate improvement	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation support for restructuring at the Manual Complex	Not clear
Indianapolis	State requirements for students to pass high school exit exam	Washington Community School will become a "Success for All" school in fall 2002	Not clear
Milwaukee	Parental choice widely available through charter schools and vouchers	Not clear	Not clear
Oakland	District's New Schools policy provides choice among small schools	BayCES' "incubator" for small schools supports program design, curricula, assessment, evaluation, implementation	BayCES has proposed necessary areas of autonomy for new small schools
Providence	The Met School is a laboratory for the state's department of education and is subject to state guidelines for accountability	The Met has capacity to help other school development efforts	The Met has been granted freedom of action by the state's department of education
San Diego	State accountability provisions for student achievement	High Tech High has capacity to help other school development efforts	State law gives charter schools freedom of action

Appendix A:
Local Contacts for *Making Connections* Education Initiatives

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Appendix B:
Glossary

Academic internship: An opportunity for students to supplement classroom instruction by spending time in a workplace under the direct supervision of an employee, usually contributing directly to the work produced by the organization. Students often produce written or oral presentations to document what they have learned in academic internships.

Charter school: An independent public school of choice that is open to all students, receives public funds for operation, is freed from many rules and regulations that district schools are generally required to follow, and is accountable for results that are specified in a performance contract with the school's public sponsor. Sponsors can be a school district, a special chartering board, or other authorized public agency. Charter school laws differ from one state to another, but all states require the schools to be accountable for student outcomes.

Community organizing: Initiatives that build social and political resources in communities by helping residents mobilize themselves and their assets.

Community schools: Public schools that bring together various partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families, and communities—before, during, and after school, seven days a week. Community residents play active roles in designing, governing, and operating community schools.

Contract schools: Public schools that operate with public funding and a defined contractual relationship with a local school district or other education agency. Contract schools usually have greater autonomy than "regular" schools but remain accountable for students' academic success.

Family strengthening: A major goal of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's investments aimed at improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and youth. It encompasses a variety of activities, plans, actions, and strategies aimed at connecting families to the opportunities, support, and help they need to do the best possible job of raising their children.

Making Connections: The demonstration project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development Initiative. *Making Connections* is based on the premise that children do well when their families do well, and families do well when they live in supportive communities. It currently operates in 11 cities or metropolitan areas across the United States; an additional 11 sites participate in the *Making Connections* learning network without pursuing the full *Making Connections* agenda for change. Specific activities are determined by local stakeholders, but most fall within three broad strands of work: (1) connecting families to economic resources and opportunities, including those that build wealth and assets; (2) making services and supports more accessible and responsive to families; and (3) building families' social networks.

School district (more formally known as a Local Education Agency or LEA): A governmental entity, usually with a locally elected board of trustees, that governs public schools in a specific geographic area. School districts receive money to build and operate schools from local, state, and federal sources.

State education agency (sometimes known as a SEA): A division of state government that administers state funding (and most federal funding) for public schools. SEAs often administer state policies for charter schools.

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